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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, REFERENDUM, ARAB LEAGUE; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Referendum, and the Arab League were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on October 10, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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- [1A. "The Arab League's Role in Supporting Iraq" \(Al-Jaridah, affiliated with the Arab Socialist Movement, published this front-page unattributed editorial\)](#)

"Iraq has been eager to attend Arab League conferences and meetings since the downfall of the former regime because Iraq is part of its Arab neighborhood. After the former dictatorial regime was toppled, the Arab League failed to adopt a positive stance toward Iraq's situation; the former regime damaged Iraq's relationship with the Arab League and for this reason the League should have played a positive role in the new Iraq. It should have called for all Arab countries to open embassies in Baghdad in spite of the deterioration of the security situation.

"Concerning the military and security situation, many armed groups have infiltrated Iraq and destabilized the country. In addition, these groups have attempted to split the Iraqi people by conducting attacks that lead to the killing of dozens of innocent civilians. Despite all of these attacks, the Arab League has done nothing. Moreover, the Arab League should have called for Arab countries to cancel the debts Iraq owes them. We have noticed that most of non-Arab countries have canceled Iraq's debts while the country is still suffering under the burden of heavy Arab debt arrangements, which have weakened the Iraqi economy. Without a doubt, the negative attitudes of some Arab countries concerning security and the political and economic situation in Iraq have given Iraqis reservations about the Arab League's role in this country. As a result, Amr Musa's mission will not be easy under the current conditions. But, can the Arab League's delegation achieve national reconciliation in Iraq amongst some political, sectarian and religious groups?

"We hope that Amr Musa will be successful in his mission to unite different Iraqi groups and we believe that it is a big mistake to marginalize any group from the political process. It is important for all Iraqi groups to participate in the rebuilding of the new Iraq and achieve peace. We think that harmony is the best way to make the political process successful. At the same time, we believe that Iraq must reinforce its relationships with the Arab League and the Arab world and for this reason we hope that the visit of the Arab League to Baghdad will help to reinforce Iraq's Arab and regional relationships.

"We have heard that Amr Musa will work to achieve national reconciliation in Iraq. We do support this initiative but at the same time we think it necessary to reject sectarianism and ethnic power sharing. We must agree to have a national project in which all patriotic groups participate to accomplish national reconciliation. In any case, does Amr Musa have answers to these questions and will Iraqi political groups respond to his initiative?"

- [1B. "Will the Arab League Succeed in its Mission?" \(Al-Ittihad, affiliated with the PUK, published this page-three editorial by Abdul Hadi Mahdi\)](#)

"The Arab League's delegation has arrived in Baghdad to hold

talks and meetings with different Iraqi groups in order to achieve reconciliation through a national conference. This delegation also paves the way for the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Musa, to visit Iraq.

"The Iraqi people are asking with whom we reconcile. The Arab League has not clarified or given any details on this issue. The Iraqi people have become divided into two factions concerning Amr Musa's visit. There are Iraqis who welcome this visit and at the same time there are Iraqis who reject it due to the Arab League's positions and statements on the new Iraq's situations. We all know that the Arab League has shown no encouragement or welcoming of Iraqi activities since the downfall of the former regime. If today the Arab League wants to play the role of mediator it must be neutral.

"The current visit has come at a sensitive time where the Iraqi people are getting ready to vote on their new constitution. If this visit had come during the period of the drafting of the constitution, it would have been important and possible to achieve some goals. But, we were astonished when we heard Amr Musa say to the BBC Radio that Iraq is in danger of a civil war and the situation is very tense. He added that he cannot let Iraq suffer from division or disagreements and that there are groups and interests trying to tamper with the future of Iraq. This is exactly what Amr Musa said although he stated that he wants to achieve national reconciliation in Iraq, as if Iraqis were incapable of accomplishing such a thing. In fact, we would like to know which groups will participate in the reconciliation. Will those who slaughtered innocent Iraqis on a daily basis and destroyed Iraq's infrastructure participate in this reconciliation? What does the Arab League regard as terrorist attacks in Iraq? Has the Arab League officially condemned these operations-even once? Frankly, if the Iraqi people have not reached a state of civil war in spite of the difficult conditions following April 9, 2003 then how can they have a civil war now?

"Perhaps Amr Musa knows he will fail in his mission in Iraq and for this reason he began making such statements to justify his failure and blame Iraqi groups. He certainly knows that such statements will make some Iraqi political groups unresponsive to his initiatives. We want to know why the Arab League remained silent in the past. Why hasn't it given any assistance to the Iraqi people? Does Amr Musa's statement threaten to ignite a civil war in Iraq?"

#### 1C. "The Constitution: Between A Corrupted Past & Hopeful Present"

(Al-Muatamar, affiliated with the Iraqi National Congress led by Ahmad Al-Chalabi, published this page-fifteen editorial by Muslim Al-Mi'mar)

"After the downfall of the dictatorial regime, all types of oppression ended. Now, we have freedom of expression, religion and social freedom. Tyranny in Iraq is over and it will never return. Today is the time for the new Iraqi state and the new constitution. The new Iraqi constitution is considered to be the first constitution drafted by the hands of Iraqis, written by people who were elected, through ballot boxes, to the National Assembly. Thus, this constitution will guarantee equality and rights for all Iraqis. This constitution will ensure that there will be no more dictators because the people are the only ones with authority to decide the future of their country.

"The current draft constitution, which will be put to vote on October 15, satisfies the majority of our ambitions. At the same time, we will not say that it is perfect because it has some shortcomings. However, we must call for solidarity and unity so that we can put an end to any attempts to harm this country.

"The entire world has seen millions of Iraqis head to polling centers to participate in the January 30 elections. Now, it is time to work to decide the future of this country through our participation in the referendum on October 15. We hope that all the Iraqi people will vote for the constitution because it will build Iraq's future and guarantee justice for all Iraqis."

#### 1D. "Transitional Iraq, Permanent Constitution!"

(Al-Mashriq, independent, anti-coalition, published this page-three editorial by Dr. Hameed Abdullah)

"Suddenly Iraq has become transitional in everything: regime, government, parliament, regulations, laws, police, army, and perhaps even its flag or borders. Talking about sovereignty and independence is now considered forbidden because it disturbs our new Iraqi politicians. I remember one of those politicians that recently came to Iraq [from exile] who was asked by a journalist, 'How will you bring independence to Iraq following the ouster of Saddam's regime?' He answered, 'We will return independence and sovereignty to Iraq even if we have to pay through

bloodshed,' stressing, 'Our lives will be the price paid for Iraq's independence'".

"This constitution, which has been the cause of disagreements, discussions, car bombs, infighting, and conflicts, is considered the only permanent document in a country of a transitional government and parliament. A country that has an unknown future; therefore if you (Iraqis) feel hungry eat the constitution, if you feel frightened keep the constitution at home because it will bring safety to you, if there is a shortage in gas and fuel the constitution will grant you heating in winter, if you miss your food rations just remember that you have a constitution that will protect your rights and fill your empty stomachs...

"It is not so important that Iraq has security and stability as much as that we can tell the world that we have a constitution drafted with blood and ink. We are the model for our neighbors, who are exporting terror, or any country that exports gas and kerosene, or any country that exports dates and melons--after our country has become an empty desert!"

#### **E. "Errant Plans"**

(Al-Bayyan, affiliated with the Al-Dawa Islamic party led by Al-Ja'afari, published this front-page unattributed editorial)

"In a step similar to their last one, the so-called 'marginalized' [i.e. Sunnis] have again announced their rejection to the constitution. So through this step, Iraqis again understand that this group is insistent on abstaining from the political process. Months ago they told the political blocs that they, the marginalized, represent all boycotters, therefore they should participate in the drafting of the constitution [i.e. because they claim they were forced to boycott the previous elections and didn't do so willingly]. So the political blocs in the TNA have responded to that claim in order to achieve as much agreement on the constitution as possible.

"A lot of discussions have occurred and many changes have been made to the draft resulting in near agreement on it, and yet this group [the marginalized] returned to raise new objections which led to a delay in the draft. It has become clear that this group will reject the draft or impose their unacceptable conditions on everyone else. As a result the TNA approved the draft for referendum.

"This group [the marginalized] should have taken the opportunity to participate in the political process and play a positive role by urging people to vote. Or they should have demonstrated to the people their real reasons for rejecting the draft constitution. Moreover, we understand that this group is not representative of general Sunni opinion, because many Sunnis have expressed their desires to participate in the referendum; they consider this draft to be the only guarantee for all Iraqis' rights.

"We believe that this rejection will not change the fact that all Iraqis will vote 'yes' to the draft constitution. So this vote will be a slap in the face of terrorists by challenging them. We also believe that rejection by the boycotters will yield a similar destiny [as in the January elections]."

KHALILZAD